



COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Adopted: 9/20/21

Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted or applied as limiting an employee's right to engage in speech protected by the United States and Iowa Constitutions or as limiting the right to engage in protected concerted activity, including employee discussion regarding the terms and conditions of employment.

SECTION 1 - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the Communications and Social Media Policy is to provide guidelines for the City of Ankeny to keep staff, the media and the public fully, fairly and accurately informed of programs, services, events and issues in a timely and forthright manner. The City of Ankeny has a one voice approach to communication. This policy shall provide expectations and requirements of how employees, appointed and elected officials should conduct themselves when interacting with the media and on social media sites regarding topics relating to the City of Ankeny.

Open and timely communication with staff, the media and the public is critical to the City of Ankeny's ability to present information in a manner consistent with Ankeny City Council policies and philosophy of open government. Coordination, uniformity, accuracy and timeliness are cornerstones of strong and productive public relations.

This Communications and Social Media Policy exists to support the mission, vision, values and goals set by the Ankeny City Council and management team.

SECTION 2 - GOALS OF COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Effective public relations best serves the City through:

- Providing accountability to the public and transparency of government.
- Ensuring that timely and accurate information is conveyed to the public regarding incidents or issues of a sensitive or controversial nature.
- Establishing and maintaining an accurate public perception of the City.
- Increasing the visibility of the City of Ankeny on local, statewide and national levels.
- Informing residents of City programs and services.
- Promoting the City's achievements, activities and significant events.

SECTION III - SCOPE

This policy applies to all City of Ankeny full and part-time employees, seasonal and temporary employees, appointed and elected officials, boards and commission members, interns and any persons engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the provisions of any federal grant or contract.

SECTION IV – MEDIA RELATIONS

The following procedures and standards will be used by all departments as applicable to media relations within the City of Ankeny.

1. **Spokesperson.** The communications director serves as the public information officer (PIO) for the City of Ankeny and conveys the official City position on routine media inquiries, issues of citywide significance and situations that are sensitive and controversial in nature.
2. **Primary City Contact.** The communications director will serve as the primary source of City information, providing background information about City issues, projects, programs and services.
 - a. The communications specialist serves as PIO in the absence of the communications director.
 - b. The city manager or appointed designee serves in the absence of the communications director and communications specialist.
3. **Secondary City Contact.** Directors are required to designate a media liaison for their department. This will be kept on file in the Communications Department.
4. **Media.** Media inquiries, whether verbal or written, are to be directed to the communications director who will evaluate the request and provide an answer, or direct it to the appropriate spokesperson. Priority attention should be given to all media inquiries. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and ensure that all information released is accurate. Accuracy of information takes precedence over media deadlines. If another priority prevents an immediate response, a courtesy call should be made to the reporter confirming what information is requested and advising when the requested information will be available.
5. **Exceptions.**
 - a. **The Police Department** has a designated PIO who handles media inquiries and news releases for the department. If a major event or administrative event occurs the Communications Department would assist or lead the communications efforts. The designated Police PIO shall inform the Communications Department prior to a release being sent.
 - b. **The Fire Chief** may designate his/her own department spokespersons to handle media inquiries related specifically to public safety emergencies (for example, fires and accidents). Post emergency media relations shall be handled under general provisions of this policy. Staff members who provide emergency medical care to the public should refrain from speaking to the media and refer them instead to their department's designated Public Information Officer (PIO). The Communications Department should be advised within a reasonable period of time when this exception clause is used.
 - c. **Non-routine/administrative media requests** should be forwarded to the communications director prior to response. These may include responses that require the interpretation of policy, employee information and emergency situations.
6. **News Releases/Media Notifications**
 - a. All news releases, media notifications and alerts are to be forwarded to the communications director for review and approval, unless it is an emergency. The release will be sent by the communications director or communications specialist with the exception of the Police Department. The designated PIO for the Police Department will write and send news releases on behalf of the department. The

communications director shall have discretion to rewrite draft news releases submitted by a department. Department directors or other staff who initiate a news release shall have the opportunity to review any edits before its release. The communications director will serve as the contact for scheduling interviews and requests for more information.

- b. After hours/emergency news releases, media notifications and alerts should be forwarded to the Communications Department upon release to the media.
 - c. Designated department spokespersons should be prepared to respond to questions from the media following release of information.
7. **News Briefings** may be conducted to educate the news media about potentially controversial issues and provide reporters an opportunity to ask in-depth questions. In most briefings, the City provides extensive background materials, fact sheets and explanatory materials. The PIO will be responsible for scheduling any such briefings.
8. **News Conferences** will be held at the direction of the communications director, city manager or mayor (or designee/successor) to announce or respond to an issue of significance or controversy with a united voice pertaining to facts, information, rules, and emergency or crisis situation or the established policy/rules of the City.
9. **Emergency Media Relations.** In the event of a disaster or emergency that requires the Ankeny Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to be activated, the City's Emergency Operations Plan designates the communications director (or designee) responsible for primary media relations as Public Information Officer (PIO). The plan also designates a line of succession to this responsibility when the PIO is absent or when a second shift is required.
 - a. Upon the Proclamation of a Local Emergency by the Ankeny City Council, the mayor, mayor pro tem, city manager or designee may conduct the first news conference announcing such Proclamation.
 - b. The communications director will work with the city manager and public safety officials to prepare for a news conference.
 - c. Contact with the media by elected officials shall be arranged by the PIO.
10. **Photo Opportunities**
 - a. Departments should advise the Communications Department about possible photo opportunities on projects that are resident sensitive (tree trimming, construction projects, sidewalk repairs, etc.).
11. **Television Appearances/Interviews**
 - a. The designated department spokesperson should forward the media request to the communications director.
 - b. Any television appearances or interviews for print should be arranged through the Communications Department prior to the interview. If prior notification is not possible, the communications director should be notified shortly after the interview.
 - c. The communications director can provide assistance and advice in dealing with the media.
 - d. Employees should remember they are representing the City and their comments should reflect the interpretation and administration of City policy. At no time should personnel issues be discussed with the media.
12. **Media Relations Training** required of management/supervisory staff with more intensive training will be provided on an "as needed" basis.
13. **Guidelines for Employees Acting as Private Citizens**

The following guidelines are offered to employees who may choose to contact the media as a private citizen. These guidelines do not prohibit such contact but support other City policies regarding improper use of City equipment and property. These guidelines also apply to employees responding to or initiating media contact as official representatives of employee groups.

- a. Letters to the editor may not be prepared on City time, printed on City letterhead stationery, or mailed at City expense.
- b. Telephone contact may not be made on City time using City telephones.
- c. Use of City email is prohibited (Refer to employee handbook Appendix H).
- d. Use of City facilities or supplies is prohibited.

SECTION V - EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The following procedures and standards will be used by all departments as applicable to external communications including those identified under Section IV. All communications should follow the guidelines established in the Ankeny Brand Standards Guide, including logo usage, writing style, color palette and fonts.

1. All printed or online materials are to be coordinated through the Communications Department, unless it is an emergency including, but not limited to:
 - a. **Brochures/Flyers/Fact Sheets** - Text and draft layout should be forwarded to the Communications Department for review, copyedit, page layout and design edit and approval.
 - b. **Newsletters** - City departments are encouraged to offer story ideas for newsletters. The Communications Department will be responsible for final editing, layout and distribution.
 - c. **Annual Reports** – Department annual reports should be submitted in draft form to the Communications Department for final editing prior to printing and distribution.
 - d. **Surveys** – The Communications Department will create and oversee surveys for departments.
 - e. **Other** – All other forms of public information should be forwarded to the Communications Department prior to production and distribution for review, edit and approval.
 - f. **Notices to Residents**
 - i. Notices should be provided for street closings, tree trimming, parking restrictions, information meetings, etc.
 - ii. The text and suggested layout should be forwarded to the Communications Department for final approval. If notices are for emergency purposes, the department may issue without prior review and approval.
 - g. **Door to door distributions** should not be placed into mailboxes, but attached to doors with rubber bands or hand delivered to residents.
 - h. **Department forms** should follow the guidelines established in the Ankeny Brand Standards Guide, including logo usage, writing style, color palette and fonts. If posting online as a PDF, the form should be a fillable PDF to meet ADA guidelines.
 - i. **Grammar, clarity, punctuation and spelling** should be double checked for accuracy prior to submission to the Communications Department for review and approval. Jargon should be eliminated. AP style should be used in all writing.

2. Speaking Engagements

- a. City departments participating in speaking engagements should make the Communications Department aware of the request prior to the event.

3. Promotional Events

- a. Primary coordination is the responsibility of the department including school tours, special events, career fairs, contests, etc.

4. Information Meetings

- a. Primary consideration resides with the department. If needed, the Communications Department will help promote the meeting to the appropriate audience.
- b. The Communications Department will be notified prior to the meeting including date, purpose, and audience.

5. Advertising

Text and suggested layout will be forwarded to the Communications Department for final copy edit and approval..

SECTION VI – SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a term encompassing a wide range of websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. This policy applies to any social networking, social media, or web-based, information sharing/open communication site (including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, blogs, wikis, message boards and more). To ensure continued support for the City's "one voice" policy and since such sites are by their nature collaborative and unstructured, unrestricted use of these media can potentially result in content posted that runs counter to the City's interests and/or exposes the City to legal action. All social media sites that carry the City of Ankeny name and branding elements will be operated and maintained by the Communications Department.

This policy applies to the use of social media to interact with the public by City employees in their capacity as a City employee. It applies to any person who is provided an account on the City's network or systems including all employees and elected officials.

This policy is in addition to and complements any existing or future City policies regarding the use of technology, computers, smart phones, email and the internet. The use of City electronic resources implies an understanding of, and agreement to this policy.

- 1. Use.** All official City communication through social media, social networking, and web-based sites shall remain professional in nature, and shall be conducted in accordance with City policy, practices, and expectations. City employees must not use official City social media, social networking, or web-based sites to conduct private commercial transactions or to engage in private business activities. Only individuals authorized by the communications director may publish content to City social media accounts.
- 2.** The purpose of using social media platforms is to provide news and information on City services, City government or City sponsored or produced events and to use the public forums for community outreach and engagement. Examples of how City social media platforms are to be used include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Road closures
 - b. Public safety and weather emergencies

- c. Community development
- d. Community service
- e. Employee recruitment
- f. Parks & Recreation programs and activities
- g. Sponsored events

Authorized Representatives. The City's communications director or his/her designees are the only authorized City agents to establish a post and response as an official representative of the City of Ankeny accounts.

- a. Authorized agents: In addition to the Communications Department staff, the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library, Police Department and Otter Creek Golf Course have authorized agents managing respective accounts. Authorized agents are given administrative rights to the accounts, they do not comment or post from their personal accounts.
 - b. Employees should not respond to City of Ankeny posts on any social media accounts on behalf of the City from their personal accounts. Only authorized agents should respond to questions and comments.**
 - c. When utilizing social media for City business, those activities are considered an extension of the City's information networks and are governed by the Electronic Communication Policy.
 - d. Authorized agents representing the City of Ankeny must conduct themselves professionally and in accordance with this policy at all times as representatives of the City; failure to do so shall be subject to disciplinary action.
 - e. Authorized agents shall be familiar with and comply with the terms and conditions of the social media account.
- 3. Department Requests.** The Communications Department will review department requests to provide content for social media sites. The Communications Department will assist departments reach their stated goals by developing and defining strategies for engagement using social media.
- 4.** Departments may not create their own social media accounts without prior approval from the city manager and communications director.
- a. Departments must provide specific reasons for the need to have separate social media applications and how those social media applications will be maintained and monitored.
 - b. A content calendar and strategy must be developed.
 - c. Prior to approval, the requesting department will send post ready content to the Communications Department to post on the main City account for a minimum of 60 days.
- 5. Content/Misinformation.** Authorized agents must not knowingly communicate inaccurate or false information. All reasonable efforts should be made to provide only verifiable facts, not unverifiable opinions. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or applicable law.
- a. If employees find comments about the City that contain misinformation, they should report to their supervisor or the Communications Department as soon as possible.
 - b. Only public information can be disclosed on social media sites.
 - c. The Communications Department is responsible for moderating comments. If user content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, the content should be allowed to remain, regardless of whether it is favorable or unfavorable to the City.

- d. All users shall adhere to applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies.
 - e. The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of the Social Media Policy or any applicable law. Comments containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on City social media sites and are subject to removal and/or restriction:
 - i. Comments not related to the original topic;
 - ii. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or mental or physical disability;
 - iii. Defamatory or personal attacks;
 - iv. Threats to any person or organization;
 - v. Comments in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot measures;
 - vi. Solicitation of commerce, include but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;
 - vii. Encouragement of illegal activity;
 - viii. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
 - ix. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party.
 - f. Any removed content must be retained for a reasonable period of time, including the time, date and identity of the person responsible for the content.
 - g. Comments posted by a member of the public are the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the City of Ankeny, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City.
- 6. Access.** The City of Ankeny reserves the right to deny access to City social media sites for any individual who violates Section VI of Communications and Social Media Policy at any time and without prior notice.

7. Personal Use of Social Media.

City of Ankeny employees, elected and appointed officials and committee members who choose to maintain or participate in social media for personal use shall conduct themselves with professionalism and in such a manner that will not negatively reflect on the City or its mission. In most cases, social media posts will be seen by a public audience, and deleting posts is not a reliable way to remove them from the public domain. It should be assumed that the public is reading your words, viewing your photographs, no matter how secure or obscure the site to which a posting is made may seem. Keep in mind that anyone can take a screenshot of online activities and distribute them beyond their intended audience.

Posting on social media may bring the public spotlight to a post. Ensure that you are expressing views that you would feel comfortable discussing or defending publicly.

City employees, elected and appointed officials and committee members are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships within the City; impede the performance of their City related duties; or negatively affect the public's perception of the City.

To that end, the following guidelines should be followed when using social media for personal purposes.

- a. **City of Ankeny Employees:** Whether or not you specify on your personal social media accounts that you work for the City, the fact that you are employed by the City is public information. Be mindful that whenever you discuss issues in an online platform, whether in a personal or professional capacity, your comments can be tied back to your employment with the City of Ankeny.

City staff shall abide by the following when using social media:

- i. Staff accessing personal social media by use of City-provided electronic devices have no expectation of privacy and may have this information accessed by City staff as outlined in City policy.
 - ii. While on duty, employees may only use communications devices to access social networking sites during authorized breaks, provided such usage does not in any way interfere with the performance of job duties.
 - iii. Disparaging or otherwise unprofessional display of the City or City department logos on clothing or similar identifying items posted on personal social media sites is prohibited.
 - iv. Employees may not post discriminatory, defamatory, libelous or slanderous comments when discussing the City, its governing body, supervisors and employees.
 - v. Employees must comply with City policies and personal sites may be monitored to determine compliance with City policies.
 - vi. Employees who fail to follow the policy regarding social media may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
 - vii. Employees may not use their work email address or the City's official logo for personal online communications or activities. Although employees may identify themselves as employees of the City, employees shall not identify themselves in a manner that suggests or implies they are speaking as a representative for the City, even when the communication occurs in a private setting. If any confusion is reasonably likely, the employee shall expressly state with a disclaimer that he/she is speaking in a personal individual capacity and not for or on behalf of the City.
 - viii. Employees may not attribute personal statements or opinions to the City when engaging in private blogging or postings on social media sites.
 - ix. Nothing in this policy is meant to prevent an employee from exercising their right to make a complaint of discrimination or other workplace misconduct, engage in lawful collective bargaining activity, or to express an opinion on a matter of public concern that does not unduly disrupt City operations.
- b. **Elected Officials and Officials Appointed to City Boards, Commissions and Committees:**
 - i. Elected officials should be mindful of the risks of electronic communication in relation to the Open Meeting Law. Be mindful electronic communication, including social media is subject to FOIA.
 - ii. Adding to a post or comment that would create a quorum of the group you represent should also be strictly avoided. (If the comment or posting requires

official review it should be handled before the group during a public meeting.)

- iii. Officials should reveal they are elected officials for the City if/when making a post on behalf of the City.
- iv. Officials should ensure that efforts to be honest do not result in sharing non-public information related to coworkers, personnel data, medical information, claims or lawsuits, or other non-public or confidential information.
- v. To help prevent errors and liability issues, the City Manager will provide officials with official City documents (i.e., an ordinance recently passed by the City Council), rather than having officials summarize. If an elected official makes a mistake, it should be corrected as soon as the official is made aware of the error. Corrections should be upfront and as timely as possible. If you modify an earlier post, make it clear the posting has been corrected. Consider designating corrections with "Fixed link" or "Fact correction" prior to the correction.

- 8. Enforcement.** This policy will be monitored the Communications Department and enforced by the appropriate department head, city manager, human resources who may use automated tools to audit and enforce compliance. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

COMMENT POLICY AND DISCLAIMER

The City of Ankeny's social media accounts are place for citizens to communicate directly with their local government.

City of Ankeny social media accounts are maintained and moderated by the City of Ankeny Communications Department to ensure that posted comments are constructive and suitable for all readers while respecting a range of opinions and points of view. Moderation will take place during City Hall's normal business hours. Staff will reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate. Posted comments by the public must comply with the following regulations:

Personal Conduct

- Comments must be civil and may not contain slanderous, libelous, malicious, offensive, threatening, profane, or insulting language.
- References to the personality of individuals or personal attacks will not be permitted.
- Comments must be within the scope of the topic under discussion. Repetitive or duplicate posts will be removed to maintain equity and ease of use for others.
- Comments containing links to other web sites or pages must be relevant to the topic.
- Comments cannot represent a person other than the one posting the comment.
- Participants are responsible for what they post. Comments must not breach any law, confidentiality, or copyright. Give credit to appropriate persons when required.
- Always think before posting; if it causes you to pause or question if it is appropriate, it most likely should not be posted.
- Spam or unrelated links to other sites will be removed.
- Comments that advocate illegal activity will be removed.

- Information that may compromise the safety, security or proceedings of public systems, any criminal or civil investigations, or any member of staff will be removed.

Topic Guidelines

As a community information resource, the City of Ankeny social media accounts are politically neutral and therefore they do not allow petitions, endorsements, advocacy or other political messages to be published in this space.

- Advertising or promotional announcements are not permitted.
- The City social media accounts are permitted to use this space for fundraising, public awareness and community outreach for City sponsored events and non-profit organizations that exist to directly support City facilities, functions, operations and personnel.
- Comments cannot include personally identifiable information, such as an address, phone number, social security number or other sensitive information.
- The Communications Department will limit the number of posts, photo albums and status updates each day. The purpose is not to overload our users with too much information. In the event of a severe weather event, crisis or emergency, the Communications Department may post as many updates as warranted.
- Anyone posting comments contrary to this social media policy may be prohibited from future participation.
- A profanity filter is enabled on City accounts and will automatically hide comments that contain any vulgar or inappropriate words that are included in the filter.

Photo Policy

The City of Ankeny does NOT permit the reproduction or redistribution of photos (in partial or whole) from its social media accounts for resale use.

Disclaimer

The City of Ankeny does not warrant or make representations or endorsements as to the quality, content, suitability, accuracy or completeness of the information, text, graphics, links and other items contained on this server. Such materials have been compiled from a variety of sources, and are subject to change without notice from the City of Ankeny. Except to the extent required by law, commercial use of the materials is prohibited without the written permission of the City of Ankeny.

Some of the links on the City social media accounts may lead to resources outside the City of Ankeny municipal government. The presence of these links should not be construed as an endorsement by the City of Ankeny of these sites or their content. The City of Ankeny is not responsible for the content of any such external link. The City of Ankeny specifically disclaims any and all liability for any claims or damages that may result from providing the City of Ankeny website or information it contains, including any websites maintained by third parties and linked to the City of Ankeny website. The responsibility for content rests with the third-party organizations who are providing the information.

By posting content, the user agrees to indemnify the City of Ankeny and its officers and employees from and against all liabilities, judgments, damages and costs (including attorney's fees) incurred by any of them which arise out of or are related to the posted content.

The City of Ankeny reserves the right to monitor content before it is posted on all of its social media, websites and accounts, and to modify or remove any messages or postings that it deems, in its sole discretion, to be abusive, defamatory, in violation of copyright, trademark right or other intellectual property right of any third party, or otherwise inappropriate for the service. The City of Ankeny also reserves the right to edit or modify any submissions in response to requests for feedback or other commentary. Notwithstanding the foregoing, City of Ankeny is not obligated to take any such actions, and will not be responsible or liable for content posted by any subscriber in any forum, message board, or other area within the service.

If any user does not agree to these terms, they are not to use the service, as violation of the terms can lead to legal liability.

SECTION VII - INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

All internal communications directed to an audience of more than one department are to be reviewed by the Communications Department prior to distribution.

SECTION VIII – PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

Public Records Request from the media or general public must be made online at www.ankenyiowa.gov or the City Clerk's Office in accordance with the City's Public Records Policy.

DISCLAIMER

The City Manager reserves the right to change, modify, amend, revoke or rescind all or part of this policy at any time.